

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 SAM-01 SCCT-01 SY-05 ACDA-05 OMB-01 USSS-00

OPR-02 AID-05 EB-07 TRSE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 SAJ-01 PER-01 PPT-01 SCA-01 SCS-03 A-01

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O P 131155Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6204

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSH DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

47\$(?5/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2211

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY SANA

AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USUN NEW YORK 2944
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 11508

GENEVA FOR SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND AMERICAN
TRAVEL TO LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 8974 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: SITUATION IN BEIRUT ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED.
DAILY BOMBINGS AND KILLINGS HAVE SO FAR LED TO NO WIDER

REPERCUSSIONS. SECURITY IS GENERALLY TOLERABLE. RECENT
GASOLINE SHORTAGE IN PROCESS OF BEING ALLEVIATED, AND
GOVERNMENT IS UNDERTAKING POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS TO
STAVE OFF CHALLENGE POSED BY LEFT-WING LED BY DRUZE
LEADER JUMBLATT WHO HAS CALLED FOR GENERAL STRIKE ON
MONDAY. WE CONTINUE TO DISCOURAGE NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL
BY AMERICAN CITIZENS. THOSE WITH IMPORTANT BUSINESS
SHOULD BE AWARE OF RISKS AND EXERCISE PRUDENCE. THEY
SHOULD AVOID AIRPORT ARRIVAL AFTER NIGHTFALL AND
CONTACT AMERICAN EMBASSY IF THEY HAVE QUESTIONS ONCE
THEY ARE IN CITY. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT REMAINS ESSENTIALLY
AS IT HAS BEEN OVER PAST TEN DAYS OR SO. ISOLATED
INCIDENTS INCLUDING BOMBINGS AND KILLINGS TAKE
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PLACE USUALLY DURING NIGHT OR EARLY MORNING HOURS
LEADING RESIDENTS TO CURTAIL NON-ESSENTIAL MOVEMENTS
AFTER DARK. WHILE MOST INCIDENTS ARE IN OUTLYING
AREAS OF THE CITY WHERE FOREIGN VISITORS ARE UNLIKELY
TO GO, SOME BOMBINGS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN CITY CENTER
IN POST-MIDNIGHT HOURS WHEN STREETS GENERALLY DESERTED.
ROADS ARE BLOCKED INTERMITTENTLY BY
VARIETY OF ARMED ELEMENTS ON A VARIETY OF PRETEXTS.

SO FAR NONE OF THESE INCIDENTS HAS FIRED ANY VERY SERIOUS CHAIN OF EVENTS AND SECURITY FORCES CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL.

3. HEAVY INTER-COMMUNAL FIGHTING IN NORTHEAST BEKA'A VALLEY AND CITY OF TRIPOLI HAS EXACERBATED TENSION IN BEIRUT, BLOCKAGE OF ROADS FROM TRIPOLI HAS MEANT CUT-OFF OF GASOLINE SUPPLIES FROM COUNTRY'S MAIN REFINERY LOCATED THERE WITH RESULT THAT EXCITABLE RESIDENTS OF BEIRUT HAVE FOR FIRST TIME BEEN DEPRIVED OF GASOLINE. WE HAVE REPORTED TYPICALLY LEBANESE REACTION TO THIS DEVELOPMENT IN HIJACKING OF GASOLINE DELIVERY TRUCKS AND ARMED COMMANDEERING OF GASOLINE STATIONS. POTENTIAL FOR INTER-COMMUNAL FLARE-UP EXISTS, THOUGH FORTUNATELY THERE HAS BEEN NO INCIDENT AT GASOLINE STATIONS TO SPARK WIDER CONFLAGRATION. AS OF MORNING SEPT. 13 LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES ARE PROTECTING GASOLINE DELIVERIES TO THE STATIONS, AND SUBSEQUENT DISTRIBUTION TO IMPATIENT LINES OF MOTORISTS. RELIEF IS IN SIGHT IN THE FORM OF NEW

DELIVERY FROM ABROAD AND PROBABLE OPENING OF TRIPOLI ROAD IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

4. SEVERAL KIDNAPPINGS WERE REPORTED IN OUTSKIRTS OF BEIRUT LAST NIGHT (SEPT. 12-13). THESE ARE BEING INVESTIGATED. EMBASSY HAS CONFIDENTIAL REPORT THAT DRUZE LEADER JUMBLATT ACTING ON BEHALF OF LEFT-WING "NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FORCES" IS PLANNING DEMONSTRATION IN TOWN OF BEIT EDDINE FOR SUNDAY SEPT. 14. HIS SUPPORTERS WOULD HAVE TO PASS CONFIDENTIAL

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THROUGH HOSTILE VILLAGES ON ROUTE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT INTERIOR MINISTER CHAMOUN AND SECURITY FORCES ARE CONCERNED. WE GUESS EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO DISSUADE JUMBLATT FROM THIS COURSE OR AT LEAST TO CONTROL POTENTIAL INCIDENTS RESULTING FROM SUCH DEMONSTRATION.

5. INTERPOSITION OF ARMY BETWEEN MUSLIM FIGHTERS

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O P 131155Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6205

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 11508

FROM TRIPOLI AND CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS FROM VILLAGES IN ZGHORTA REGION IS BEARING RESULTS. FIGHTING IN AND AROUND TRIPOLI HAS SUBSIDED AND HOPE IS GROWING THAT THINGS CAN RETURN TO NORMAL WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. SAME HOPE IS BEING EXPRESSED FOR AREA IN AKKAR VALLEY FURTHER NORTH WHERE MASSACRE OF CHRISTIAN VILLAGERS TOOK PLACE NIGHT BEFORE LAST AND THREE ELDERLY MONKS IN A PEACEFUL MONASTERY SCHOOL HAD THEIR THROATS CUT BY UNKNOWN ELEMENTS (EVEN THOUGH THREE QUARTERS OF THE STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL ARE MUSLIM). CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN, AND MARONITE PATRIARCH KREISH MADE PUBLIC STATEMENT YESTERDAY IMPLYING CHRISTIAN REACTION IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT STOP ALL FIGHTING SOON. BUT PATRIARCH ALSO APPEALED TO OTHER ARAB STATES TO HELP LEBANON IN ITS TIME OF TROUBLES (AN UNUSUAL MOVE FOR CHRISTIAN PATRIARCH) AND, AGAIN, THERE IS NO PRESENT INDICATION OF WIDER REPERCUSSIONS.

6. MONDAY, SEPT. 15 THREATENS TO BRING GENERAL STRIKE CALLED BY JUMBLATT FOR BEIRUT. HE IS COMMITTED TO THAT COURSE THOUGH HE HAS REMAINED AMBIGUOUS ON WHETHER OR NOT IT WOULD BE FOR ONE DAY ONLY. THERE HAVE BEEN INDEPENDENT RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT FROM MERCHANTS' GROUP THREATENING ITS OWN STRIKE TO MANIFEST DISPLEASURE AT INSECURE SITUATION, BUT WE GATHER MERCHANTS HAVE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND ARE IN TOUCH WITH UNION LEADERS SO
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AS TO AVOID UNWITTINGLY GIVING SUPPORT TO JUMBLATT'S POLITICAL OFFENSIVE.

7. WE ARE IMPRESSED BY EFFICIENT PEACE-MAKING EFFORTS OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT UNDER UNQUESTIONED LEADERSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER KARAME. HE HAS BEEN FORGING ALLIANCE OF MODERATE MUSLIM ELEMENTS TO COUNTER CHALLENGE BEING POSED BY JUMBLATT AND LEFTISTS.

HE IS BEING SUPPORTED BY INTERIOR MINISTER CHAMOUN, WHO AT THIS POINT APPEARS TO REPRESENT MAJORITY OF CHRISTIAN OPINION. THIS INCLUDES RIGHT-WING PIERRE JAMAYEL AND HIS PHALANGISTS WHO ARE EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS, AS WELL AS ARAFAT AND PLO (INCLUDING SA'IQA) WHO ARE ASSISTING KARAME IN ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE DISCIPLINE ON REJECTIONIST FRONT PALESTINIAN FORCES, NOTABLY PFLP. MODERATE CONSENSUS IS EMERGING WHICH ISOLATES JUMBLATT, SPLINTER LEFT-WING TROUBLE MAKERS AND THEIR PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST FRONT (PFLP, PLFP-CX GC, AND ALF) SUPPORTERS ON THE ONE HAND AND FRANGIE CHRISTIANS AND OTHER ELEMENTS AROUND ZGHORTA WHO MAY STILL BE SEEKING REVENGE ON THE OTHER. CAREFUL CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO DECISION TO INTERPOSE ARMY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM FORCES SEEMS TO BE PAYING OFF FOR KARAME. HE AND CHAMOUN ARE VERY MUCH IN DRIVER'S SEAT AND EFFECTIVELY STAVING OFF CHALLENGE FROM JUMBLATT AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT.

8. AS TO CAIRO'S SPECIFIC QUERY (REFTEL) EMBASSY CONTINUES TO DISCOURAGE NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL TO BEIRUT OR LEBANON. THERE IS LITTLE FOR CASUAL VISITORS TO DO IN ANY CASE, SINCE COUNTRY'S TRADITIONAL NIGHT LIFE HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY DAMPENED BY EVENTS AND SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS SUCH AS BAALBEK OR TYRE AND SIDON IN THE SOUTH SHOULD REMAIN OFF LIMITS FOR AMERICAN TRAVELERS. WE SEE NO REASON TO DISCOURAGE AMERICAN TRAVELERS WITH ESSENTIAL BUSINESS PROVIDED THEY ARE CAUTIONED ON RISKY SITUATION AND NEED TO EXERCISE PRUDENCE. OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT TRAVELERS MUST CONTINUE TO OBTAIN PRIOR PERMISSION FROM WASHINGTON. CONFIDENTIAL

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ALL TRAVELERS SHOULD AVOID AIRPORT AFTER DARK (I.E. ABOUT 7:30 PM). AIRPORT ROAD IS ONE OF THE MOST SENSITIVE AREAS, WHERE TROUBLE OFTEN BEGINS. TRAVELERS MAY CONTACT AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AFTER ARRIVAL. LAMBRAKIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, GASOLINE, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS, ENERGY CRISIS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT11508
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750318-0484
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750953/aaaabuse.tel
Line Count: 322
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 CAIRO 8974
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND AMERICAN TRAVEL TO LEBANON
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ASEC, LE
To: STATE CAIRO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006